UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1875
19 April 1995

WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council condemns recent attacks on peace-keepers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and demands end to acts of violence against UNPROFOR; calls on parties to extend cessation of hostilities agreement and to resume negotiations on overall settlement.

+ Secretary-General expresses horror at terrorist attack in Oklahoma City; extends condolences to families involved and to people of United States.

+ UNPROFOR requests NATO air presence after heavy fighting between Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serbs in Sarajevo; three British peace-keepers wounded by mines near Gorazde.

+ NPT should be extended indefinitely and unconditionally, United States tells 1995 Review and Extension Conference; China supports smooth extension, but not for single fixed period.

+ Secretary-General appeals to Member States to take urgent action to ensure voluntary return of Rwandese refugees; says deteriorating food situation in refugee camps reflects serious donor fatigue.

+ United Nations agencies and NGOs hold urgent meeting in Rwanda after unannounced Government operation to close camp for displaced persons; Special Representative stresses need for transparency and respect for human rights.

+ Friends of Secretary-General express concern about security situation in Haiti; stress need for effective police force, fair judicial system, and free and fair elections in June.

+ Security Council Committee on sanctions against Libya gives approval for Egyptair to carry 6,000 Libyan pilgrims to Saudi Arabia.

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For information media—not an official record

+ Member States owe United Nations $3.1 billion as of 15 April; $1.1 billion owed to regular budget and $2 billion owed to peace-keeping.

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The Security Council today strongly condemned the recent attacks on peace-keepers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and demanded that all parties refrain from acts of intimidation or violence against the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR). The Council emphasized once again the responsibility of the parties and others concerned in the Republic for the Force's security and safety. It took that action by unanimously adopting resolution 987 (1995), which was sponsored by France.

The Council invited the Secretary-General to submit, on an urgent basis, proposals on any measures which could prevent attacks against UNPROFOR and its personnel, and allow it to perform its mission effectively. It called on the Bosnian parties to extend the current cease-fire and cessation of hostilities agreements beyond 30 April, and to cooperate with the Force in their implementation. The Council urged all parties and others concerned to resume negotiations on an overall peaceful settlement, based on acceptance of the Contact Group peace plan as a starting-point.

Following the adoption of the resolution, the Permanent Representative of France said the assassination of two French peace-keepers in Sarajevo over the weekend was totally unacceptable. The killings reflected the deterioration of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and there was a risk that UNPROFOR's mission there would be called into question. France expected that the parties would respond immediately to today's resolution.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today expressed his horror at the terrorist attack in Oklahoma City and the resulting loss of innocent lives. He extended his condolences to the families of those involved, as well as to President Clinton and the people of the United States who were the victims of the outrage. He added that he was following the situation closely.

The Secretary-General left Headquarters this morning for London, and was scheduled to depart for Indonesia tomorrow.

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Three British peace-keepers were wounded by mines while on routine foot patrol near Gorazde this morning, according to a United Nations spokesman. They were evacuated to Tuzla hospital with serious, but not life-threatening, injuries.

In Sarajevo last night, Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serb forces exchanged mortar and artillery fire for several hours, in what the spokesman

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described as a very serious incident. At UNPROFOR's request, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) aircraft flew over the area for 40 minutes and the fighting died down.

Meanwhile, there were unconfirmed reports that the Croatian Serbs and forces loyal to rebel Muslim leader Fikret Abdic had launched a major offensive action east of Velika Kladusa, on the northern confrontation line of the Bihac pocket. There were no United Nations observers in the area to verify those reports.

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United States Vice President Al Gore today urged the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to support its indefinite and unconditional extension. He told the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference that the Treaty remained central to the cause of international peace. All questions and criticisms relating to the NPT could be answered not only by logic and argument, but by the performance of the Treaty and its Parties over the past twenty-five years. He added that nuclear disarmament remained the ultimate goal of the United States.

South Africa's Foreign Minister, Alfred Nzo, said his country had decided to destroy its nuclear weapons because the NPT's provisions guaranteed its security. The Treaty ensured the continuing commitment of the nuclear-weapon States to disarmament. South Africa's supported, in principle, its indefinite extension. The review and extension process should not damage the Treaty, and the decision on extension should be taken only after every effort had been made to achieve the broadest possible support.

Yesterday, Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen expressed support for the "smooth" extension of the NPT, but not for a single fixed period. Should the option for multiple-period extension be chosen, each period should be no less than 25 years. If the option of indefinite extension were chosen, it must be made clear that it did not perpetuate the prerogative of nuclear-weapon States to possess such weapons. Whichever option were chosen, regular reviews of the Treaty's implementation should continue.

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The Secretary-General has appealed to Member States to take urgent action to ensure that all Rwandese refugees and displaced persons in the Great Lakes region voluntarily return home. In a report dated 14 April, he said achieving that goal would require the combined efforts of the countries of origin and asylum, as well as the international community.

The report called attention to the deteriorating food situation in the camps. Food shortages had led to the beginnings of malnutrition among women and children, and the refugees believed that the international community was using food as a weapon to force them to return to Rwanda. The Secretary-General said those developments were a sign of serious donor fatigue, and appealed to donor nations to reverse the situation.

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The deployment of the Zairean Camp Security Contingent and the Civilian Security Liaison Group in refugee camps had improved conditions, he continued. The presence of the Contingent might help to prevent incidents such as the attack on the Birava camp on 11 April, in which 31 refugees were killed by unidentified men. He stressed, however, that improved security conditions in the camps would not ensure the voluntary repatriation of all refugees. The Government of Rwanda must promote genuine national reconciliation and ensure that refugees could return home without fear of persecution.

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United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in Rwanda met today on an urgent basis after the Rwandese Government launched an operation to close the Kibeho camp for internally displaced persons. At least eight were trampled to death yesterday when Government troops entering the camp fired into the air, according to a United Nations spokesman. The camp houses some 120,000 displaced persons, of whom 30,000 to 35,000 were directly affected by the operation.

The United Nations agencies and the NGOs were attempting to work out a plan to deal with the situation and to accelerate the return home of the displaced persons, the spokesman continued. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) had provided 28 trucks to transport those who had expressed a wish to go home, while the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was bringing in food, water and other necessities. Some displaced persons had already left the camp on foot, and the Rwandese Government had closed the nearby border crossing into Burundi.

The spokesman said that the United Nations had not been informed of the operation in advance, and that the agencies had been caught off guard. Special Representative Shahryar Khan had emphasized the importance of transparency and respect for the human rights of the people involved. Meanwhile, the Rwandese Government had announced plans to close another two camps.

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The Friends of the Secretary-General on Haiti have expressed concern about the security situation in the country. They said the early deployment of an effective police force and the reactivation of a functioning and fair judicial system were central to Haiti's long term stability. They joined the Secretary-General in calling for Member States to contribute to the creation of an adequate police force and to the international police monitoring programme. The Friends -- Argentina, Canada, France, the United States and Venezuela -- made those comments in a letter to the President of the Security Council issued on 17 April.

The Friends underlined the need for free, fair and peaceful legislative and local elections in June, as a crucial step in consolidating democracy in Haiti. National reconstruction and reconciliation efforts must be intensified

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to reduce the potential for violence and uncertainty. While the Government and people of Haiti bore the main responsibility for those efforts, immediate and sustained international assistance was needed. The Friends expressed confidence in the Secretary-General's Special Representative, the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) and the International Civilian Mission (MICIVIH), and stressed the need to build on their achievements.

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The Security Council Committee monitoring the implementation of sanctions against Libya today gave approval for Egyptair to carry 6,000 Libyan pilgrims to Saudi Arabia on 45 flights. The pilgrims will return to Libya on an equal number of flights. The Committee took that action in response to a request by the Government of Egypt, according to a United Nations spokesman.

The flights will be monitored by the countries involved and the United Nations to ensure that they are used only for the declared purpose, the spokesman said. The Council does not have to vote on the Committee's decision.

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As of 15 April, Member States owed the United Nations a total of $3.1 billion, according to the latest update on the Organization's financial situation. Of that amount, $1.1 billion was for assessments for the regular budget and $2 billion was for peace-keeping operations.

The United States -- the largest debtor -- owed $527 million to the regular budget and $689 million to peace-keeping. The Russian Federation owed $63 million to the regular budget and $568 to peace-keeping.

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